

# Education, Outreach, and Information Technology

In an age of E-Government initiatives and reduction of paperwork, the NJFO utilizes a team of communications experts in day-to-day work activities. The presence of not only an Information Technology (IT) Specialist but a Communications Specialist and a Visual Information Specialist on staff has produced a design team with the technical ability to support the activities of the NJFO with products such as reports, briefing materials, and public information/outreach publications.



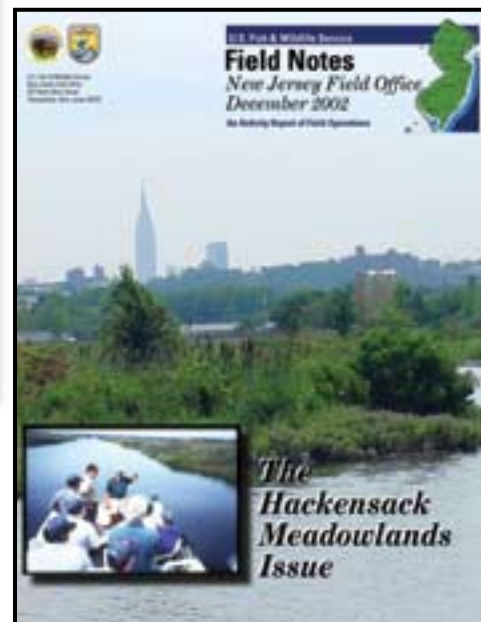
Printed publications are being replaced by electronic PDFs and emails. For example, *Field Notes*, the NJFO's "activity report of field operations," began ten years ago as a single-folded paper document and has grown into a 21<sup>st</sup>-century online and hard copy, color magazine. The 2002 Hackensack Meadowlands Issue has proven itself a powerful tool for advocacy, as has the most recent edition featuring invasive species. Colorful fact sheets are now accessed at the click of a mouse. Posters, exhibits, displays, CDs, maps, brochures, briefing books, and other publications produced "in-house" also attest to the value of a team of communications specialists to provide public outreach.

The outreach and IT specialists support NJFO activities. The IT Specialist provides support and instruction to staff at the NJFO and nearby FWS facilities in the use of computers and related hardware, software, and printers. The IT Specialist also serves as the network administrator and telecommunications system manager for the NJFO's local area network (LAN). The Communications Specialist edits documents and articles. The Visual Information Specialist provides electronic imaging expertise and training, lays out products to be published or mounted for display, and advises on the Service's graphics standards as well as the legal use of images and copyrights.



The Visual Information Specialist is also the webmaster for the NJFO's web site. Implementing E-Government policies makes the NJFO more responsive and cost-effective in serving the public.

The NJFO workflow has been enhanced by a Lotus Notes database designed and initiated by our IT Specialist. Other offices within the Service now use this database. The IT Specialist also supervises and maintains operations for all LAN to WAN (Wide Area Network) services including all internet-based communications, such as World Wide Web, subscription services, e-mail, and secure Service databases. Another aspect of IT operations at NJFO is the organization, installation, configuration, maintenance, and repair of all computer hardware and software, and equipment inventories.



Two other outreach efforts, media relations and environmental education, are managed by the Communications Specialist. The media are powerful image-shapers that can help make the public aware of the benefits we provide, and education is key to raising generations of American citizens committed to the preservation of wildlife habitat. The NJFO is the only field office in the Service that has maintained the Service's environmental education program, Earth Stewards, now known as The Nature of Learning, from its inception a decade ago to the present. Three schools have finished their commitments to The Nature of Learning, and the NJFO has embarked on a fourth educational relationship with the Stafford Township Intermediate School. The national Hands on the Land program has also supported the NJFO in its environmental education program.

In summary, devoting two staff positions to Outreach and Education and a third to IT has been a successful strategy for the NJFO in fulfilling the Service's mission. Building public support for environmental conservation is a monumental task. It requires a strong Service investment in personnel and in funding.

